

# Thoughts on Christian Apologetics

In the eighteenth century, Alexander Campbell addressed the idea of the existence of God in terms of where the idea of God originated. Since everyone has a concept of God, the question is: where did this idea come from? This is the query of Campbell to a group of atheists' publishers, publishers of a magazine called New Harmony Gazette.

## A PROBLEM

### To the Editors of the New Harmony Gazette

You think that reason cannot originate the idea of an Eternal First Cause, or that no man could acquire such an idea by the employment of his senses and reason—and you think correctly. You think also that the Bible is not a supernatural revelation—not a revelation from a Deity in any sense. These things premised, gentlemen, I present my problem in the form of a query again.

The Christian idea of an Eternal First Cause uncaused, or of a God, is now in the world, and has been for ages immemorial. You say it could not enter into the world by reason, and it did not enter by revelation. Now, as you are philosophers and historians, and have all the means of knowing, how did it come into the world?<sup>1</sup>

The Christian idea of an Eternal First Cause uncaused is the only answer for human existence. The question that confronts everyone is: how did men and women come into existence. One knows that men and women did not make themselves. If they did not make themselves, then one must ask himself or herself the above question: how did men and women come into existence? The answer: God created Adam and Eve. Another question that one is confronted with in his or her search for God: where did the idea of God come from? The answer: God revealed Himself through revelation. Neither man nor woman could have originated the concept of God through imagination or reason. Why? Humanity lives in a world of five worlds—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling. It is quite evident that human beings could not have invented the idea of God through the five senses. The idea of God had to come from outside the sphere of this world of time and space. It is through the five senses that men and women acquire his or her ideas of the universe; it is not through the senses that one's idea, or concept, of God exists. Men and women could never, without the aid of Divine Revelation, have originated the idea of Deity. God revealed Himself to Adam and Eve, and this revelation came to Adam and Eve through direct disclosure from God, not Adam's and Eve's five senses. God's existence had to come to both through direct revelation, not through the five worlds of nature.

After God revealed Himself through direct interaction, one then sees God in creation. The five senses, in and of themselves, do not reveal the existence of God by themselves. God had first to reveal Himself through revelation. Today, all humanity has some concept of God, which notion came through God disclosing Himself to Adam and Eve. Once God unveiled Himself, mankind is then able to see evidence of God's existence and creation. For example, within the five senses of humanity, one discovers design, which design suggests the idea of supreme intelligence. Without the sense of smell, life often times would be destroyed. Next to smell is that of taste. Through the world of taste, one is able to discriminate between that which is agreeable or disagreeable to health.

The Author of nature wisely ordered the locale, or geographical location, of the sense taste. If this sense had been located somewhere else, this world would be valueless to humankind. Within this world of taste, one is also cognizant that saliva is associated with the world of taste. This action enables the tongue to discriminate the qualities of the food, or substance, as pleasing or displeasing. Feeling is another world of humanity that exhibits design in creation. One, through this sense, is able to determine the roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, coolness, hotness, and so on, of objects, which ability is essential to one's well being. If one were born without these three avenues of intelligence, these three worlds would be closed and one would remain forever in ignorance. Without these three worlds, one could never originate the idea of material tangibility, that is to say, something that is sensible, touchable, verifiable, graspable, well-rounded, and so on.

The fourth world of the five senses is hearing. With this faculty, one is able to discriminate vibrations and motions of the air. Every impression made upon the outward ear reaches the middle ear. If one is born deaf, that person has no idea of the nature of sound; therefore, this one cannot learn the art of speaking. One who is deficient of this world of hearing cannot communicate his or her ideas to others. Finally, the fifth world is seeing. This world is one of the most perfect and delightful of all senses. This is the avenue of intelligence through which all one's ideas of color, magnitude, and distance are derived. The impressions made upon this sense reach the sensorium, or brain, through the optic nerve. One's ideas of colors, sounds, odors, tastes, and touch are derived through these five senses.

Why is this study of the five senses important in answering the question: where did the idea of God come from? It is obvious that there is nothing in the five senses that could have revealed God without God first having revealed Himself through Divine Revelation. One could not acquire such knowledge without revelation from God. It would be just as rational to talk of seeing by the hand, or hearing by the tongue, as for one to talk of knowing God without a communication from God Himself. What is revelation? Revelation cannot be applied to anything done upon the earth. It is a communication of something that the person to whom it is revealed did not know before. Revelation is supernatural. It means Divine communication concerning spiritual and eternal things—a knowledge that one could never have attained by the exercise of his or her reason upon material, or sensible, objects. The human intellect has no creative powers. It can only rearrange in new images the data already received through the world of senses. The world of spirits is outside his or her world of five senses.

Another endowment, or special capacity, of humanity is the faculty of speech. Where did the ability to speak come from? No one has ever spoken who was not first spoken to. Language is purely an imitative thing. How do infants learn to speak? Do they speak as

naturally as they see or smell? The answer is no! Speech is the result of training; it is an imitative faculty of men and women. Without God, the Divine instructor, one could not have communicated to others. God first spoke to Adam and Eve, and this ability has been passed on to mankind through copying, or echoing, speech patterns. Speech, like faith, comes by the ear. Whatever comes by the ear is derived; therefore, human language is acquired. Human language is not natural.

There must be the existence of something before one can assign a name. In other words, the idea of anything must necessarily be prior to the invention of a name for it. Why is this concept important? All nations have had a mental impression of Deity before the word *God*, in their respective languages, could have been invented. For example, the word *steamboat* did not exist prior to steamboats. So it is in the spiritual realm. For example, names such as God, Spirit, altar, priest, and sacrifice are common names to mankind. How were these names derived to men and women? All these conceptions must have existed previously to the invention of names to express them. Speech is as legitimately the subject of Divine Revelation as religion itself, both came from God.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Campbell, *The Evidences of Christianity: A Debate Between Robert Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland and Alexander Campbell, President of Bethany college, VA*—Held in Cincinnati, Ohio, in April 1829—(reprinted—Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Co, 1957), 123.